



# News Release

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**For immediate release:** May 1, 2008

(08-066)

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## **Pollution threatens 17 commercial shellfish growing areas**

**OLYMPIA** — Pollution threatens shellfish harvesting in 17 of the state's commercial shellfish growing areas.

The state Department of Health produces a list annually based on evaluations of the state's 97 commercial shellfish growing areas in greater Puget Sound and the coastal waters of Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay. Last year, there were 15 areas on the list.

"Washington is a national shellfish leader, and while shellfish are vital to our state economy the growing areas also serve as a barometer of the health of our Puget Sound and coastal waters," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "We're seeing progress, but big challenges remain as we work to restore a healthy environment to the waters of the coast and around the Sound."

The Department of Health Shellfish Program has produced the annual list of [threatened shellfish areas](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/growreports.htm) ([www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/growreports.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/growreports.htm)) since 1997. As recently as 2005, there were 25 growing areas facing threats from fecal pollution. The number has been dropping gradually, yet many of the areas on this year's threatened list have been listed in previous years.

"The list helps target cleanup efforts to keep these areas clean and productive," said Bob Woolrich, growing area manager for the Department of Health. "Early action can make a big difference in restoring water quality and avoiding more costly and complicated pollution problems down the road."

The pollution threat in four locations is severe enough that growing areas have had to be closed or be subject to reduced harvest under some conditions.

The 2008 threatened shellfish area list includes portions of these growing areas (some waters cross county lines, so appear twice in the list below):

- Grays Harbor County – Grays Harbor
- Island County – Point Partridge (west shore of Whidbey Island) and South Skagit Bay
- Jefferson County – Mats Mats Bay and Mystery Bay
- Kitsap County – Burley Lagoon and Dyes Inlet
- Mason County – McLane Cove in Pickering Passage and North Bay
- Pacific County – Bay Center and Naselle River
- Pierce County – Burley Lagoon, Filucy Bay, Henderson Bay, Oro Bay and Rocky Bay
- Snohomish County – South Skagit Bay
- Thurston County – Henderson Inlet
- Whatcom County – Drayton Harbor

The list gives an early warning about areas that may be affected by growing pollution problems this year, and some areas have already seen changes in classification. A portion of Burley Lagoon was downgraded in early April, and actions are underway in Pickering Passage, North Bay, and Naselle River.

“This year’s threatened shellfish areas list shows that despite progress, Puget Sound pollution is getting worse,” said David Dicks, executive director of the Puget Sound Partnership. “We all contribute to the problem, so we all must work together on a solution – before it’s too late to bring the Sound back to health.”

More information on the list of threatened shellfish areas and other shellfish issues is available on the [Shellfish Program and Water Protection Web site](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/default.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/default.htm). A [map of the 2008 threatened areas](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/Pubs/threatareas.pdf) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/Pubs/threatareas.pdf) is also available online.

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